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## News

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### **New Sample Bill will Aid States in Banning Texting While Driving** *Sample Bill Supported by Auto and Wireless Industries and the Safety Community*

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today unveiled sample legislation to be used as a starting point for states crafting new laws to prohibit texting while behind-the-wheel, the latest step in the campaign against distracted driving.

The sample state law, prepared by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and a cross-section of safety and industry organizations, would authorize law enforcement officers to stop a vehicle and issue a citation to drivers who are texting while driving.

"Texting while driving, like talking on cell phones while driving, is an extremely dangerous and life-threatening practice," said Secretary LaHood. "This language, which we created with a variety of safety organizations, is another powerful tool in our arsenal to help the states combat this serious threat."

There is heightened concern about the risks of texting while driving because texting combines three types of distraction – visual, taking the eyes off the road; manual, taking the hands off the wheel; and cognitive, taking the mind off the road.

According to NHTSA research, nearly 6,000 people died in 2008 in crashes involving a distracted or inattentive driver, and more than half a million were injured. Research also shows that the most frequent offenders are the youngest and least-experienced drivers, men and women under 20 years of age.

"Our top priority is safety and we are determined to help the states eradicate the dangerous practice of texting while driving," said David Strickland, Administrator for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The sample state law is patterned on the Executive Order issued by President Obama on October 1, 2009, directing federal employees not to engage in text messaging while driving government-owned vehicles or with government-owned equipment. Federal employees were required to comply with the ban starting on December 30, 2009. In addition, on January 26, Secretary LaHood announced federal guidance to prohibit texting by drivers of commercial vehicles such as large trucks and buses. Truck and bus drivers who text while driving commercial vehicles may be subject to civil or criminal penalties of up to \$2,750.

Secretary LaHood announced the department's plan to pursue this regulatory action at the Distracted Driving Summit he convened in September 2009. The department recently launched a federal website, [www.distraction.gov](http://www.distraction.gov), as a forum and information clearinghouse. Distraction.gov is a source of comprehensive information on distracted driving.

Currently, nineteen States and the District of Columbia have texting laws covering all drivers. In 2009, more than 200 distracted driving bills were considered by State legislatures and legislative activity is expected to remain strong in 2010.

[Click here to see the sample bill and the groups that participated in drafting it.](#)

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